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SUBJECT: UNDERSTANDING AND ROLLING BACK THE INSURGENCY IN
KAPISA PROVINCE

Classified By: Interagency Provincial Affairs Deputy Coordinator Hoyt Y
ee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: State Department Representative to the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the eastern Afghan province of Kapisa held separate conversations covering the insurgency in the province with a shura leader, radio network director/community leader and police chief in recent weeks.

Each painted a similar picture of a non-ideological insurgency whose fighting force consists largely of unemployed young "drug addicts" with local roots. None believes there is broad-based support for the insurgent cause. This information dovetails with the emerging PRT Kapisa strategy of coordinating with local shuras (especially in TaGab District) to enhance economic opportunity and employment, and increase support for GIROA. Although the security situation in Kapisa has deteriorated steadily over the last several months, we believe it is possible to make significant progress against the Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), and criminal elements operating in the province in the near to medium term. Careful coordination with French Task Force Lafayette -- which becomes the battle space owner starting November 1 -- will be key for the success of the U.S. PRT's counter-insurgency strategy. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Following an early September shura (community meeting) at the TaGab District Center at which a pomegranate cooperative was formed, State Rep met privately with Haji Ibrahim, the aged leader of the most established shura in the TaGab district and a respected elder among Pashtuns throughout Kapisa. Even though there were no other Afghans in the large meeting room, Ibrahim pulled State Rep into a corner opposite the entrance and shared his views on insurgent elements in TaGab. He expressed his full support for ISAF efforts in Kapisa ("You didn't come to destroy, but to build"), but said our activities thus far have not been well conceived. After applauding military operations against the "criminals," he added that more needed to be done to prevent them from re-establishing after they are chased off. He said that there were no more than 200 Taliban in the area and half were ordinary "thieves, murderers, and drug addicts." He also shared his frustration about the lack of effective development projects, saying that small bore programs here and there "have no effect on security." On the other hand, the elder stressed that programs that provide major economic development and give sustained employment would result in "every one of them putting down their rifles."

13. (S) Task Force Cyclone Senior Civilian Representative and PRT Kapisa State Rep met with Dr. Abdul Mutaleb, the director of Radio Nijrab on September 9. The station covers a large portion of Kapisa, including the districts of Mahmood Raqi, Alisai, TaGab, and Nijrab (the most volatile areas in the

province). In addition to being well-known and well-respected among his local Afghan audience, the station director has a long-standing, constructive relationship with ISAF. Dr. Mutaleb reported that he has received "night letters" from the Taliban because he plays music not authorized by the Taliban, encourages participation by women in his programming, and broadcasts PRT messages. A self-described communications and cultural leader in his community, he was adamant that he would not be intimidated and would continue doing what he considers to be the right thing. He further stated that he believes "providing education and jobs for young people is "the most effective way to defeat the local insurgency," as most fighters are adolescent ne,er-do-wells who receive payment for their nefarious activities. (Note: According to other PRT sources, many local "insurgents" are paid according to a fee schedule by instigators based in Pakistan. End note.)

14. (SBU) State Rep returned to TaGab September 23 for a meeting with the executive board of the newly formed pomegranate cooperative. Chief of Police Zelwar, who has been shot three times by the Taliban and has recently been promoted to general, arranged security for the meeting. State Rep asked him for his views on the insurgency. Zelwar said the number of insurgents ebbs and flows, with 200-300 fighters currently operating in the area. He said about a third are indigenous Taliban, a third are ex-mujahadin (mostly HIG and a third are well-armed outlaws living in the countryside who oppose anybody who tries to restrict them. He also described most Taliban fighters as uneducated drug addicts. He lamented that the lack of educational or economic opportunity leads many young men to go to Pakistan and Iran

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to work as day laborers, whereupon they become addicted to opium and heroin. They are then prime candidates for recruitment into the insurgency. Zelwar expressed his belief that the local insurgents are "poorly organized and have little power."

15. (SBU) At least three of the four leaders of the shuras in TaGab have embraced PRT,s efforts to form a pomegranate cooperative and link local farmers to buyers in Kabul, India and Dubai who will pay significantly higher prices than have traditionally been paid by their sole existing market in Pakistan. This effort has created an opportunity for good will among the hard-pressed farmers - many of whom have had Taliban links. PRT Kapisa and the Kentucky Agriculture Development Team are working closely with the local shuras to ensure the success of the cooperative and build on the effort through additional agricultural, employment and other projects. The French are funding a much-needed cool storage facility for fruit in TaGab. The Kapisa Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) has been an active participant in both pomegranate cooperative meetings and is adamant that he will fully support local farmers. The PRT plans an aggressive public diplomacy/information campaign focused on these activities to build support for GIROA.

16. (SBU) Comment: TaGab, Nijrab and Alisai have been identified as "critical districts" by GIROA. PRT Kapisa's interagency command group shares this assessment. We further believe that interagency counterinsurgency efforts combined with the French Task Force Lafayette, which will be responsible for the battle space starting November 1, should focus on TaGab. The Kapisa agriculture director is an able administrator whose work demonstrates GIROA's commitment to the people of TaGab. It is significant that he is Tajik and TaGab is almost exclusively Pashto.

17. (SBU) Comment continued: Rising attacks against GIROA and ISAF (including an IED on September 22 that injured several members of PRT Kapisa) are well known. However, given the relatively small number of insurgents, their mostly non-ideological nature, and their limited command and control capacity, it is possible to make significant progress in our

counterinsurgency efforts in the near to medium term.
In addition to "clear and hold" operations by Task Force
Lafayette, more resources may be needed to solidify successes
and open opportunities for similar efforts in neighboring
critical districts. As we proceed with our COIN efforts in
TaGab, careful coordination between the U.S.-led PRT and the
French Task Force Lafayette will be key.
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